

NETWORK NEWS

INFORMATION FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

DELIVERING TECHNOLOGY ACCESS TO AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES



By collaborating with OUP grantees, centers can tap into many resources.

Centers Partner With Higher Education to Enrich Communities

Neighborhood Networks centers face an ongoing challenge in searching for good partners, but one potential solution might as close as the nearest college or university. Does your Neighborhood Networks center need computer equipment or software? How about job training, literacy, and computer classes for adults, or after-school activities for children? If a nearby college or university is working with HUD's Office of University Partnerships (OUP), it may have resources that are available to your center.

By collaborating with OUP grantees, Neighborhood Networks centers can tap into many resources to enrich and expand their programs. The partnership between Herrington Village Computer Center, a Neighborhood Networks center, and Elizabeth City State University (ECSU), a historically black university in North Carolina, illustrates how this type of partnership can provide complementary resources to build and deliver successful activities.

Herrington Village Joins With Local University to Provide Computer Access

"Hey, I have the space. I need you to equip the computer center so we can help people cross the digital divide." That is how Clennie C. Banks, director of the

Neighborhood Networks center at Herrington Village Apartments in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, approached Morris Autry, director of the Community Development program at ECSU, which is located next to the apartment complex.

While attending an annual convention for housing managers, Banks had heard about the Neighborhood Networks program from other managers who had collected and reconditioned used computers and set up onsite computer centers. An ECSU alumna, Banks talked to friends who worked on campus about the lack of computer access for Herrington Village's 258 residents. Her friends directed her to Autry and the university's computer center, and that was the impetus for this

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U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Multifamily Housing Programs
www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org



In the United States, one in four adults functions at the lowest literacy level. Adults with low literacy skills experience social, economic, and personal challenges that compromise their abilities to support themselves, to help their children in school, and to fully participate in society.

—ProLiteracy Worldwide
Web site
(www.proliteracy.org)

ProLiteracy Worldwide Provides Resources and Local Links


ProLiteracy Worldwide (formerly Laubach Literacy and Literacy Volunteers of America) provides educational support to more than 1,200 community-based literacy programs located in all 50 states. Its international programs serve adult new learners in 45 developing countries. In partnership with local groups, the organization assists with literacy instruction through training, core materials, and resources to meet adult learners' diverse needs.

NetworkNews recently interviewed ProLiteracy staff to find out how Neighborhood Networks centers and stakeholders can access this organization's resources. ProLiteracy responses were provided by Beth Kogut, director of corporate communications, and Jane Hugo, director of special projects, who also coordinates the United States component of ProLiteracy's Women in Literacy program.

NetworkNews: Do you think ProLiteracy and Neighborhood Networks are a good match?

ProLiteracy: Absolutely, given their common goals and targeted clients. ProLiteracy concentrates on basic reading, writing, English language, and math skills. We offer many resources including grants, information, and materials. We can also assist Neighborhood Networks centers with locating a local ProLiteracy group that can provide direct literacy services.

NetworkNews: What specific resources could Neighborhood Networks centers access from ProLiteracy Worldwide?

ProLiteracy: We have a number of resources that Neighborhood Networks centers can access through our Web site (www.proliteracy.org). 

NETWORKNEWS

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Center's Partnerships Key to Family Literacy Effort

Since opening its doors as a Neighborhood Networks center in March 1999, the Family Learning Center (FLC) has worked with its partners to provide enhanced opportunities for residents of the San Juan del Centro housing community in Boulder, Colorado. According to Shelley Sullivan, FLC's adult education director, one of the center's most innovative and successful programs is the Family Literacy Program, part of the center's collaboration with the Boulder Valley School District.


Recognizing the need to improve literacy levels in the community, FLC submitted a successful competitive grant application to the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL). This nonprofit group provides leadership and resources to promote family literacy at both the state and national levels. Like most competitive grant programs, NCFL requires applicants to form partnerships and leverage resources to carry out their proposed activities. For Sullivan, this meant developing partnerships with the city of Boulder, the Boulder Valley School District, and Boulder Reads, a literacy program offered through the Boulder Public Library.

In developing the center's literacy program, FLC staff drew on NCFL's family literacy model, which focuses on both children and their parents. There are four program components: Parent and Child Together Time, which provides interactive parent-child learning activities; Adult Education; Children's Education; and Parent Time, which provides parents with information about their children's literacy development. "We're trying to support the students in an educational setting that is comfortable for them. Once students are comfortable, learning in earnest can begin," Sullivan explains.

The family literacy program is showing positive results according to Sullivan, who feels especially proud of one particular student, Lute. When this young woman and her preschool-age daughter joined the program, Lute lacked confidence in her reading and writing abilities. As she participated in the program, both her confidence and literacy skills improved. Now, almost 3 years later, Lute has been offered a better job at the Boulder Community Hospital and continues with her classes at FLC and with a tutor from the Boulder Public Library. Lute hopes to take the general equivalency diploma exam sometime next year.

Building on its original onsite literacy programs, FLC also is collaborating with Boulder Community Hospital to provide basic literacy and education programs to its employees. In addition to the literacy initiatives, the center also offers after-school programs, homework help, tutoring mentorship, and community youth activities. For these initiatives, FLC developed partnerships with Boulder Valley School District, the Boulder Community Mental Health Center, the Boulder County Health Department, the Boulder Police Department, El Centro Amistad Minority Issues Coalition, and the University of Colorado, which provides volunteers for many programs.

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The Family Learning Center works with its partners to provide opportunities to residents of the San Juan del Centro housing community in Boulder, Colorado.

Centers Partner With Higher Education *(continued from page 1)*

“Hey, I have the space. I need you to equip the computer center so we can help people cross the digital divide.”

*—Clennie C. Banks, director,
Neighborhood Networks center,
Herrington Village Apartments*

Neighborhood Networks center-HCBU partnership.

“Make sure you have a space commitment from management before you ask the university’s assistance,” Banks advises. She convinced the property owner to take two apartments offline to house the computer center.

“In our case, the management was supportive. They realized that a computer center would be a drawing card to get good families.” With program space available, Banks was ready to speak with Autry.

“I first heard about Neighborhood Networks when the university’s computer science department received a National Aeronautics and Space Administration grant to train teachers in computer skills,” Autry explains. “Some of these teachers were from Virginia Beach and had volunteered at Neighborhood Networks centers there.”

When Banks asked Autry to support her center, he was ready to help. “We wanted to get involved with Herrington Village’s center because of its proximity to the university.”

In 1999 ECSU applied for and received an OUP grant to work with the Herrington Village community to equip the Neighborhood Networks center. The university’s Community Development Program provided software, computers, and furniture. Academic Computing Center staff set up the computers and loaded software. ECSU’s administrative computer center staff wired the Neighborhood Networks center, and computer science department faculty identified computer science majors to teach computer classes.

In addition, ECSU leveraged a grant from Sprint that covered the cost of Internet access for a year. Herrington Village opened its computer center in July 2000.

“One of the biggest challenges of teaching computer literacy classes was that almost everyone started at a different level of computer knowledge—from not knowing how to use a mouse to knowing a little keyboarding,” Autry explains. “At first it was difficult to get people to enroll, but word of mouth soon brought more students than we had room for. Enrollment does fluctuate, so we do open the classes to the community if there is space. Herrington Village residents, though, always have priority.” Nearly 25 percent of the people taking computer literacy classes are senior citizens, including several who are more than 80 years old.

Like many other OUP grantees, ECSU gives continuing education credits to students who complete computer classes at the center. “While they are not academic credit, these credits are important. They indicate to the student and to future employers that he/she has completed a course given by a university,” Autry says. Although the university has not done extensive followup, residents report that the computer literacy classes have helped them in their jobs. “A couple of people who work as teachers aides said that they feel more valuable in the classroom and can help the students more with their work.”

Banks plans to use the center and its computers to teach adult literacy classes. According to Autry, “There are plenty

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Whitefield Commons Uses Partners, Volunteers to Expand Services

How do you implement a literacy program on a limited budget? “With a lot of outreach and a little determination, it’s not as hard as you’d think,” says Kim Fodor, center director at the Whitefield Community Resource Center. “By forming partnerships and utilizing volunteers, we are able to provide more high-quality services with limited paid onsite staff.”

Developing relationships with local organizations and government agencies is fundamental to implementing successful programs at Neighborhood Networks centers. The Whitefield Community Resource Center, located in Arlington, Virginia, exemplifies how a center can prosper by using available community resources. With a staff of only two employees, the center depends heavily on its various partners to help with daily activities and to support a full range of educational and social services offered to youth and adults.

One of Whitefield’s biggest assets is the large number of volunteers who provide assistance to the center. These volunteers come from local businesses and organizations as diverse as the community they serve, including:

- The Literacy Council of Northern Virginia, which provides a teacher and volunteers for the center’s English classes.
- George Mason University, which supplies a student to help teach the center’s basic computer literacy classes.
- Mount Olivet United Methodist Church, which provides one or two volunteers every day for the center’s after-school program.

- VolunteerMatch (www.volunteermatch.org), a nonprofit online service that supplies instructors for the center’s computer and general equivalency diploma classes.

Just a Phone Call Away

“We were able to form many of our partnerships, including the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia, by simply picking up a phone and giving them a call,” says Fodor. This effort drew volunteers from and established partnerships with a variety of resources, including:

- Local libraries.
- Substance abuse prevention programs.
- The Cooperative Extension Service.
- The Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation.
- Local employment and one-stop centers.
- Local adult education and English as a Second Language programs.

Centers might also consider local places of worship as sources of partners and volunteers. They can provide volunteers and donate materials, and usually are interested in helping. “Our center has really changed because of our relationship with Mount Olivet,” says Fodor.

Fodor also advises center administrators to attend local community meetings. “In addition to being a valuable resource for center planning and finding out what’s

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Whitefield Commons (continued from page 5)


going on in the community, these meetings provide a perfect networking opportunity and chance to meet people who are willing to help the center.”

Whitefield Community Resource Center formed a partnership with George Mason University after Fodor attended a local youth computer literacy meeting. At that meeting, she met a professor from the university who was interested in including the center in a research project on self-directed learning communities and how technology affects their programs. As part of this project, students from the university visit the center to help with daily activities while receiving college credit.

According to Fodor, partnering with local and county governments is another good

source of assistance. “The county has the resources to plan good programs, and they are here to serve the community. They are looking to implement their programs, but lack access to participants to implement the programs, or don’t have space to teach—we help each other out. I find it easier to make use of another organization’s services rather than plan the programs myself. You just have to be open and willing to try new things,” says Fodor.

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How-To Guides for Neighborhood Network Centers

Do you know about HUD’s free informative guides to assist Neighborhood Networks stakeholders with developing literacy and other programs?

Engaging Adults in Literacy Programs at Neighborhood Networks Centers, a July 2002 HUD publication, offers:

- Information on the special characteristics of adult learners, including the challenges they face and what motivates them to acquire and strengthen their basic skills.
- Ideas for getting started and choosing the best methods and tools for your center’s literacy programs.
- Links to resources for setting up programs.

To obtain a copy of this guide or other Neighborhood Networks publications:

- Go to HUD’s Neighborhood Networks publications Web site at www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/nnw/resourcesforcenters/nnwpublicationsguides.cfm.
- Call or e-mail the Neighborhood Networks Information Center:
Toll-free (888) 312-2743
E-mail: mail@NeighborhoodNetworks.org
TTY: (800) 483-2209
- Write to:
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NN Centers Partner With Higher Education *(continued from page 4)*

of good software programs available to help adults improve their reading and math skills. The biggest problem is getting people to enroll because it is typically embarrassing to admit that you can't read well. People need to have a comfort level before they'll sign up." The Neighborhood Networks center plans to address this issue in the planning process.

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OUP Seeks to Revitalize Communities

HUD established the Office of University Partnerships in 1994 to recognize the potential of America's colleges and universities to help revitalize their communities. Through grant programs, conferences, and research, OUP encourages universities to collaborate with community groups in lower income neighborhoods to address real-life problems such as joblessness and affordable housing.

Working with community partners such as Neighborhood Networks centers, OUP grantees play active roles in revitalizing neighborhoods by applying research to real-life urban problems, coordinating outreach efforts with neighborhood groups and residents, acting as a local information exchange, galvanizing support for neighborhood revitalization, and developing public service projects and instructional programs.

OUP sponsors several annual nationwide grant competitions, including:

- **Community Outreach Partnership Centers Program:** COPC provides 3-year grants of up to \$400,000 to encourage institutions of higher education to partner with their communities. These partnerships respond to the most urgent needs of urban communities through initiatives that include offering job training and counseling, combating housing discrimination, mentoring neighborhood youth, and assisting new businesses.
- **Hispanic-Serving Institutions Assisting Communities Program:** HSIAC offers 3-year grants of up to \$600,000 to Hispanic-serving institutions of higher learning to undertake housing, economic, and community development projects.
- **Historically Black Colleges and Universities Program:** The HBCU program awards 3-year grants to historically black colleges and universities. This program funds services, housing, community facilities, and economic development projects serving low- and moderate-income people.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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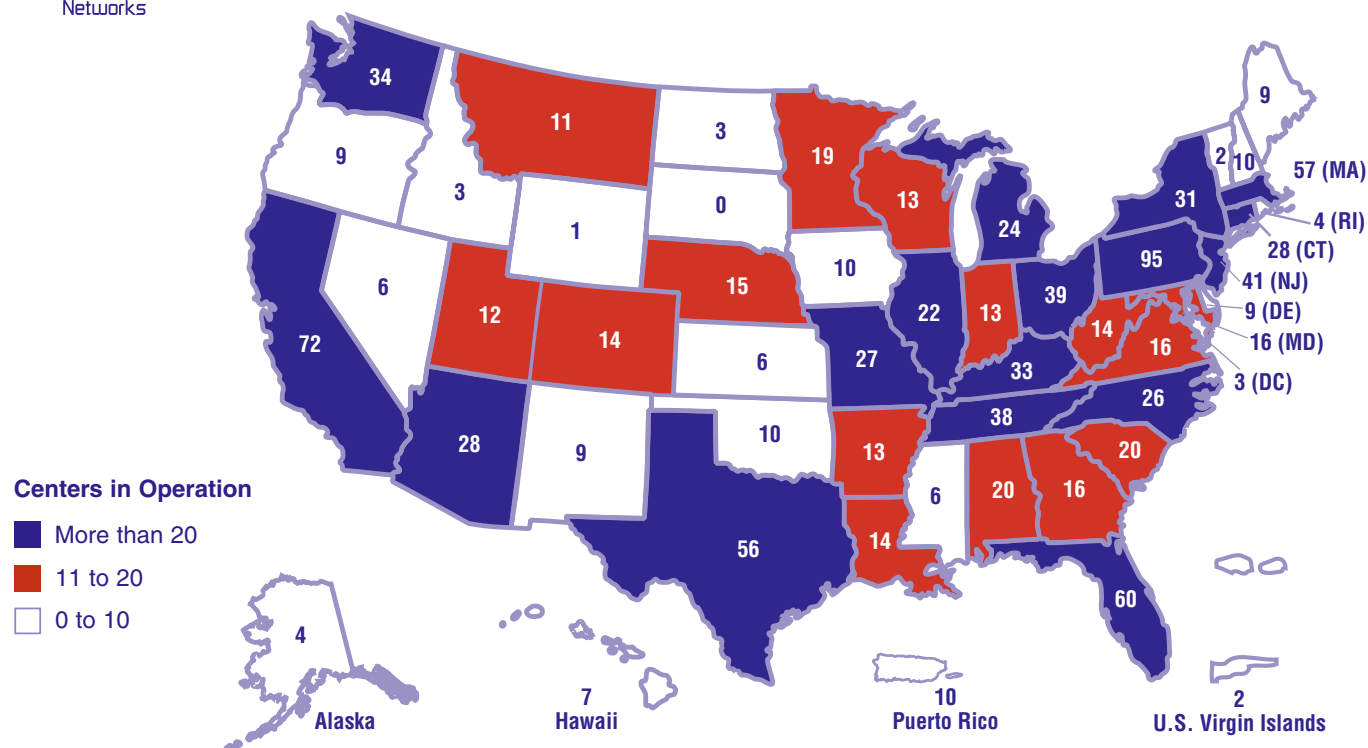
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Neighborhood Networks Centers in Operation

*As of October 15, 2002, 1,060 centers are in operation in
FHA insured and assisted multifamily housing*



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development